

**Record damages settlement as paper says sorry**

# Pop star Elton's joy at £1m libel case pay-out

**ELTON John was last night said to be "delighted" with his record £1 million damages settlement from The Sun newspaper.**

A joint statement issued by the singer and The Sun said he was pleased the paper's allegations against him had not been aired in open court during a libel trial.

The paper yesterday published a front page apology headlined Sorry Elton following a series of articles about his personal life and his pet dogs.

Later the editor, Mr Kelvin MacKenzie, said he wished personally to associate himself with the apology over articles in the paper in February and September last year.

The statement said: "The Sun now accepts that there is no truth in any of these highly defamatory allegations. The paper also recognises the great distress these articles caused to Elton and apologises to him."

The statement went on: "So that there should not remain any shred of doubt as to the untruth of all these allegations, and in recognition of the very serious damage and distress which these articles have caused to Elton John, The Sun has agreed to pay him the record sum of £1 million damages and also to pay his legal costs."

But the deal came under fire from the High Court judge who was to hear the case.

Agreeing to the settlement — the largest ever pay-out in a libel action — Mr Justice Michael Davies said the court had been "manipulated" by The Sun's "pre-emptive strike" in publishing the apology.

## Fitness

"Reading it, one would think that Elton John and the newspaper had formed a mutual admiration society," he commented.

He said that, although vindication of the pop superstar's reputation had been the principal consideration in announcing the settlement in that way, "nevertheless the parties were determined to milk the

situation in order to obtain the maximum publicity to both sides".

The situation was unique, he said. The newspaper had not only published the draft settlement before it was approved by the High Court, but had followed it with a second "laudatory" article about Elton John — a two page spread about the singer losing weight and taking up a new fitness fad.

Later Elton John gave an impromptu press conference on the steps of his solicitor's office in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Looking dapper in a grey suit and bowler, the new super-slim Elton smiled at the cameras.

"It's just sinking in and I feel very relieved," he said.

Thanking his lawyers, his family and the public for their



Elton John: Delighted

support, he said that for the past two years he had been "living under a cloud".

"It was embarrassing and depressing. I just want to get on with my life, now that I've been vindicated. All this has made me a stronger person."

Asked to comment on the judge's criticism of a "mutual admiration society", Elton said: "I don't think it is any of the judge's business."

## Upset

Elton, who is to tour America next year, said he had not yet decided what to do with his £1 million.

His solicitor said: "Elton does not want to talk for long. He is very upset about the train crash at Clapham Junction."

No details of the allegations made by The Sun about the singer's private life were given in court.

By Jo Casey